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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 1362nd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 22 January 1990, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. TADESSE (Ethiopia)

CONTENTS

Opening of the session by the Secretary-General

Statement by the Secretary-General

Election of officers

Organization of work

Co-operation with United Nations bodies

Co-operation with non-governmental organizations

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I declare open the 1990 session of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: At the outset I should like to extend to the Chairman, Ambassador Tesfaye Tadesse, and members of the Committee my good wishes for the New Year and to express my appreciation for their praiseworthy efforts over the past 12 months.

This year the work of the Special Committee will assume particular importance in view of the activities that are being planned by the United Nations to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples contained in resolution 1514 (XV) of 1960. The success that has attended the implementation of that Declaration can be gauged by the fact that since 1962 45 dependent Territories have been enabled to exercise their right to self-determination. Today only 19 remain on the Committee's list of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

It is indeed an encouraging fact that as the Special Committee begins its deliberations one of those Non-Self-Governing Territories, Namibia, has reached the final stage leading to independence. This happy situation would not have come about had it not been for the resolve of the Namibian people and the support they have received from the international community. The role played by the Special Committee is well known. It has been an active advocate of the rights of the Namibian people.

(The Secretary-General)

I was pleased to learn that the Special Committee had dispatched a delegation to Namibia in November to monitor preparations for the elections and to observe the actual electoral process. I am sure the experience gained by the United Nations in Namibia will be of value in other similar situations.

I am aware that the question of Western Sahara is among the major concerns of the Special Committee. In this respect I should state that I was encouraged by the consensus resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 11 December 1989 on the question of Western Sahara. There is no doubt that that development is an indication of the continuing support of the international community for the implementation of the United Nations plan leading to a peaceful, fair and lasting solution to that long-standing question. The joint efforts of the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and myself in the search for a peaceful solution have also been helped by the understanding shown by the two parties concerned and by their co-operation and their commitment to the continuation of the peace process. I should like to express as well my appreciation for the constant encouragement of the countries of the region. In the coming months it is my intention to meet with the current Chairman of the OAU as well as with the parties to build further on the progress that has been achieved.

In the Caribbean and the Pacific a number of island Territories are faced with a unique set of problems arising from their size and population, their geographical isolation and their limited economic development. The United Nations has not allowed those factors to serve as an obstacle to the exercise of the right to self-determination of the peoples of those island Territories. The Special Committee has initiated a number of procedures which have enabled the United Nations to improve its understanding of conditions in those Territories and of the

(The Secretary-General)

political aspirations of the inhabitants. Those procedures include the dispatch of visiting missions and missions to observe and supervise elections, plebiscites and referendums.

We must continue to count on the co-operation of the administering Powers in bringing the decolonization process to a successful conclusion. I hope they will continue to facilitate the periodic dispatch of United Nations visiting missions to the Territories and to provide the United Nations with up-to-date information on each Territory in accordance with Article 73 (e) of the Charter.

In conclusion, I wish the Committee every success in the discharge of the mandate that has been entrusted to it.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I understand that members of the Committee are in agreement that the following representatives should be elected Committee officers for the current year: Ambassador Tesfaye Tadesse of Ethiopia as Chairman of the Special Committee; Ambassador Ricardo Alarcon de Quesada of Cuba, Mr. Sverre J. Bergh Johansen of Norway and Mr. Alexander Slaby of Czechoslovakia as the three Vice-Chairmen; and Mr. Mohammad Najdat Shaheed of the Syrian Arab Republic as Rapporteur.

Accordingly, I declare those representatives elected unanimously to their respective posts.

I extend my warm congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the other members of the Bureau. I look forward to working closely with all of you in the coming months.

I now invite Ambassador Tadesse and Mr. Shaheed to take their places at the podium.

Mr. Tadesse (Ethiopia) took the Chair.

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The CHAIRMAN: The entire membership of the Special Committee of 24 joins me in conveying our best wishes for the year and in expressing to you, Mr. Secretary-General, our most sincere appreciation of your presence in our midst today. Your convening personally the opening meeting of the Special Committee for the year, on this thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, despite a busy schedule, and the important statement which you have just delivered, are clear testimony to your abiding commitment and dedication to the cause of decolonization and to your unflinching support for the work of the Committee.

It is with deep gratitude that my delegation and myself wish to thank members of the Committee for the tribute they have paid to me personally and, through me, to the people and the Government of Ethiopia in re-electing me Chairman of the Special Committee, with which my country has been closely associated since its inception.

It is with a sense of gratefulness that I renew to all members of the Committee the assurances of my readiness to do my utmost to assist the Committee in the faithful and effective discharge of the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly.

Resolution 1514 (XV), known as the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, adopted by the General Assembly in 1960, is a landmark in the history of the Organization. Indeed, it is thanks to the principles embodied in the Declaration that many a Territory heretofore under colonial jurisdiction has attained full statehood and joined our ranks here at the United Nations.

The fact that the membership of our Organization has grown from 50 countries at its creation in 1945 to 159 nations today is irrevocable proof that the decolonization process is necessary and irreversible. The march towards

(The Chairman)

self-determination and the progress of colonized people to freedom is one that continues to defy the lop-sided logic of the forces of repression and enslavement.

Thus, much ground has been covered since the adoption of the Declaration, and it is with a sense of commonly shared pride that I note the astounding achievements of the Special Committee in the field of decolonization.

Our satisfaction with the achievements, however, should not diminish our efforts, for colonialism in different parts of the world has not been totally eradicated. There are a number of complex problems that must still be solved and our attention needs to be focused on what remains to be done. In so doing, we must resolve to maintain the impetus achieved in the last 30 years since the adoption of the Declaration and indeed to accelerate the pace of decolonization until we have attained our full objectives.

Even as I speak today, the Territory on our list, Namibia, about which the Committee has spent years of hard work and dedication is preparing to achieve independence, and in so doing will be claiming its rightful place among the free nations which, patiently and relentlessly, worked to achieve this objective.

My expression of gratitude goes to all members of the Committee, and to you, Mr. Secretary-General, your Special Representative and the members of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG), for their strong and steadfast commitment to the cause of decolonization, which has made all these developments possible.

In thanking you, Mr. Secretary-General, for the sagacity and tenacity with which you acquitted yourself of your most demanding duties before, during and after the elections for a Constituent Assembly in November in Namibia, under the control and supervision of UNTAG, I wish to state that in the view of the Committee this exercise of self-determination in Namibia constitutes one of the most important

(The Chairman)

accomplishments of the Organization in recent times in the advancement of global freedom and the cause of peace in the world.

Indeed, Mr. Secretary-General, putting resolution 435 (1978) on the right track required much wisdom and planning. Your sense of judgement and timing has been characteristically precise. Your balance in the interplay of quiet diplomacy and persistence for the administration of justice has been crucial. As the Visiting Mission dispatched by the Committee to Namibia was able to observe, the voting procedure was smooth and orderly and the elections themselves were conducted in a free and fair manner.

We are gratified to note that Namibia is experienceing a peaceful transitional period, thanks to the wisdom demonstrated by its people, the statesmanship of its leaders and the co-operative spirit prevailing among the parties in the Constituent Assembly. Indeed, one could not speak of the self-determination process in Namibia without paying a tribute to the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), with which our Committee has had the privilege and opportunity to work over the years. It is a pleasure for me to recall how patient and accommodating SWAPO has been throughout the entire negotiation process.

I thank SWAPO for its role then, its continuing leadership now, as witnessed by the popular mandate it received as a result of the elections, and its demonstrated statesmanship during this transitional period. We now look forward to Namibia taking its rightful place in the community of independent States.

Yet, if Namibia is to stand on its feet, it will continue to seek our collective support and assistance. In this connection, I wish on behalf of our Committee to draw the attention of all Member States, the United Nations agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to the appeal made to them by the Secretary-General to extend generous financial, material and technical

(The Chairman)

support to the Namibian people, both during the transitional period and after independence.

While we remain gratified at the turn of events which will lead to the ultimate independence of Namibia, we cannot but emphasize the need to complete the circle by paying due attention to the fate of the remaining Territories.

In this regard, the Committee intends to work closely with the peoples of the colonial Territories by inviting their representatives to address the Committee, sending visiting missions, in co-operation with the administering Powers, to the Territories concerned, continuing to disseminate information on the process of self-determination and options available to colonial peoples and hearing the views of the populations of these Territories regarding their future status. The Committee will stage a world-wide information and publicity campaign through the media and other channels of communication, further to sensitize international public opinion and national Governments with regard to the situation of the remaining Territories, in an all-out effort to muster support for their cause.

(The Chairman)

In this regard, let me reiterate my hope that the parties to the Western Sahara conflict will lend their co-operation to the Secretary-General, so that he may once again use his good offices in facilitating the peaceful resolution of this question.

Needless to say, the size and complexity of the problems of some dependent Territories must not lead us to overlook the smallest ones, most of which are island Territories with specific political, economic and social problems, which the Committee will address in the course of its session this year.

Indeed, as we await Namibia's independence and look forward to a peaceful settlement of the question of Western Sahara, we must aim at accelerating the process of decolonization of the remaining Territories. We must henceforth concentrate our efforts on, and devote our energies to, the situation in those Territories.

Our campaign must also take us to the administering Powers, from which we shall request and expect greater assistance than in the past, including facilitating the Committee's visiting missions, granting the people of the Territories permission to travel to United Nations Headquarters to address the Committee, and co-operating more closely with the Committee in all matters concerning the Territories under their administration.

With regard to all 18 Territories which have not yet exercised their inalienable right to self-determination it is my sincere hope that the administering Powers concerned will grant the Special Committee their full and continued co-operation. By providing the Committee with up-to-date and adequate information and inviting visiting missions to the Territories under their administration, in pursuance of relevant General Assembly resolutions and decisions, and in conformity with Article 73 e of the Charter, the administering Powers will continue to assist us in the effective performance of our task. As in

(The Chairman)

the past, I intend to remain in close contact with the administering Powers in this regard.

Also as in the past, the Committee will continue this year to consider the activities of foreign economic and other interests in the colonial Territories and military activities and arrangements impeding the implementation of the Declaration. Further, the Committee will continue to assess the assistance extended to the colonial peoples and Territories by the United Nations system of organizations.

Although the majority of the Territories present similar characteristics with respect to land and population size, remoteness and isolation, each has a particular set of political, economic and social problems, which necessitate an individual approach.

The relative economic prosperity of some of the Territories is based on services, such as tourism, international finance and insurance activities. For many, however, remoteness and scarcity of resources leave them heavily dependent on assistance from foreign sources, mainly the administering Powers. In addition, the location of many Territories exposes them to major natural disasters and calamities, which in the past have resulted in loss of life and property as well as in extensive damage to infrastructure. The recent passage of Hurricane Hugo through some of the Caribbean Territories best illustrates this point.

In this regard, the Special Committee wishes to express its gratitude to the administering Powers for the emergency assistance which they extended to the populations concerned. We also thank the United Nations system, particularly the specialized agencies, Member States and regional organizations, whose generous, timely and well co-ordinated emergency assistance was greatly appreciated in the affected areas.

(The Chairman)

It is, in our view, the primary responsibility of the respective administering Powers to help the economies of the Territories under their administration towards self-reliance and lesser dependence on external assistance. In the implementation of its strategy concerning the remaining Territories, the Special Committee will keep a keen eye on these economic and developmental aspects.

At the beginning of this new - and hopefully last - chapter of the decolonization era, I wish to call for the sustained active participation and co-operation of the members of the Committee, as well as the continued support and assistance of the Secretary-General and his staff, towards the realization of the goal, "Complete decolonization - objective 2000", which is the very motto of the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration.

On this important occasion, the Special Committee wishes to invite the international community to join it in carrying out the Programme of Activities in observance of the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration.

The Committee will organize regional seminars, at United Nations Headquarters as well as in the Caribbean and Asia/Pacific regions, during which we shall endeavour to address the specific problems of the small Territories and look for solutions adapted to the particular needs of their peoples. Through these activities we aim at fostering greater awareness of the self-determination process in those Territories, as well as at providing the populations of those dependencies with an opportunity to speak out and state their views on the issues.

In this framework, the Committee has taken steps to invite a number of representatives of the small Territories to participate in the seminars. It is our hope that the administering Powers will grant us their co-operation in this respect.

To make this commemoration an even more special occasion, we call on all delegations to the United Nations to participate in the planned commemorative meeting of the General Assembly in October this year. We invite intergovernmental

(The Chairman)

regional organizations to intensify their activities in the field of decolonization. We also invite national Governments and political, religious and other leaders to mark the occasion with special messages and related activities that will enhance the process.

Finally, we call on the United Nations Secretariat - particularly its Department of Public Information and its Department for Special Political Questions, Regional Co-operation, Decolonization and Trusteeship - to intensify its dissemination of information on decolonization, in consultation with the Committee.

As I indicated in my initial remarks, Mr. Secretary-General, you made the independence of Namibia one of the most important priorities of your mandate at the head of this Organization. Your determination, both during arduous negotiations with the parties concerned and during the implementation of Security Council resolution 435 (1978), has paid handsome dividends. In thanking you for being here with us today, and for launching this new decolonization decade, I express the wish that the international community will show equal determination, as well as support for the Committee, for the attainment of the objectives set out in the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, which says:

> "All peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development." (res. 1514 (XV), para. 2)

At this point I wish to make a few personal remarks about Ambassador Oscar Oramas Oliva, an experienced and devoted member of the Committee and a relentless fighter for the right of peoples to self-determination, who is leaving New York.

(The Chairman)

Ambassador Oramas Oliva has not only been actively associated with the Committee's work and activities for many years but has also ably served as an officer of the Committee in the capacity of Vice-Chairman for four years. Throughout this period he has ably used his talent, skills and diplomatic acumen effectively to promote a sense of unity and cohesion within the Committee in the execution of our common endeavours. He has played an active role in the promotion of the struggle of all peoples under colonial domination. On behalf of the members of the Special Committee, and on my own behalf, I wish him well in his new responsibilities. I personally shall miss his friendship and effective contribution in the discharge of my tasks.

Likewise, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my other colleagues, Mr. Mohamed Tekaya of Tunisia and Mr. Lubomir Dolejs of Czechoslovakia, for their significant contribution and a job well done.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The CHAIRMAN: Members have before them in document A/AC.109/L.1717 a note by the Secretary-General in which he draws the attention of members to the relevant resolutions and decisions on our work during 1990.

Members also have before them a note prepared by me, document A/AC.109/L.1718, containing suggestions on the manner in which the Special Committee may wish to organize its work for the year. As regards the suggestion contained in paragraph 1 of the note, it appears that members are in agreement that the Special Committee maintain its three subsidiary bodies, as before. If I hear no objection, it will be so decided.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: As regards the composition of those subsidiary bodies, I understand that the members of those bodies who served in 1989 are prepared to continue to do so for the current year. Accordingly, the membership of the subsidiary bodies is as follows: Working Group: the officers of the Special Committee and the Sub-Committees, the Congo, Fiji and the Islamic Republic of Iran; Sub-Committee on Petitions, Information and Assistance: Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Congo, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Mali, Sierra Leone, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and the United Republic of Tanzania; Sub-Committee on Small Territories: Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Ethiopia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Mali, Norway, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, the United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela and Yugoslavia.

According to indications received in this regard, I understand that members are in agreement that the following representatives should serve as officers of the Sub-Committees: Mr. Alexander Slaby of Czechoslovakia as Chairman of the

(The Chairman)

Sub-Committee on Petitions, Information and Assistance and Mr. Ghazi Jomaa of Tunisia as Chairman and Mr. Dag Mjaaland of Norway as Rapporteur of the Sub-Committee on Small Territories.

In the absence of any other indications I shall take it that the Special Committee so agrees.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to extend my warm personal congratulations to Mr. Slaby and Mr. Jomaa, as well as to Mr. Mjaaland, on their unanimous elections, and I look forward to working with them in close co-operation.

Paragraphs 2 and 3 of my note relate to the suggested allocation of items and procedure for consideration. As will be noted, most of those suggestions are based on long-established practices of the Special Committee, which, I believe, will continue to facilitate the effective discharge of our task this year.

Mr. RIANOM (Indonesia): I should like at the outset to express my delegation's congratulations to you, Sir, on your re-election as Chairman of the Special Committee. Through your dedicated service to the causes espoused by this body you have rightly earned our gratitude and appreciation. We remain confident that you will again guide our collective efforts to a successful conclusion.

My delegation's felicitations also go to the other members of the Bureau on their re-elections to this important Committee.

As in the past, I have asked to speak today to register our strong objection to the inclusion on the agenda of the Special Committee of the so-called question of East Timor in document A/AC.109/L.1718 of 18 January 1990, which has become a tiresome routine of utter irrelevance to our deliberations. In this regard, my delegation has on numerous occasions reiterated some incontrovertible facts concerning East Timor, including the prevailing situation in that province.

(Mr. Rianom, Indonesia)

To recapitulate briefly: the people of East Timor, having exercised their right to self-determination in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV), terminated their colonial status and achieved independence through integration with the Republic of Indonesia. It is a matter of record that the United Nations and its relevant bodies were kept duly informed of the various stages of the decolonization process. Subsequently, my delegation has apprised the Organization of the prevailing realities in the province, especially the Indonesian Government's commitment to give substance to the freedom won by the people of East Timor through consistent efforts to promote political, economic and social development and to protect cultural and religious rights.

It is well known that in all those endeavours Indonesia has worked closely with several international organizations - most notably the United Nations itself, as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations - in the continuing efforts to provide the East Timorese with a better life than the one they had undergone during centuries of colonial rule. As a result, the people of East Timor are now living in an atmosphere characterized by peace, progress and development. These undeniable realities have convinced an increasing number of countries of the irreversibility of the decolonized status of East Timor.

In view of the facts I have just presented, any discussion by the Special Committee of the constitutional and political status of East Timor will constitute an interference in the internal affairs of a Member State, in violation of the United Nations Charter. My delegation therefore rejects the inclusion of the item in question on the Special Committee's agenda.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the representative of Indonesia for the kind words he addressed to the Chair and to the other members of the Bureau. I wish to

(The Chairman)

assure him that the reservations he has expressed will be fully reflected in the verbatim record of this meeting.

If I hear no further comments, may I consider that members approve the suggestions I have made, it being understood that appropriate modifications may be made as developments so warrant?

It was so decided.

Mr. RIBEIRO-TELLES (Portugal): First, I should like to convey to you, Sir, as well as to the other members of the Bureau, our warmest congratulations on being re-elected.

I should like to make some brief remarks concerning what has just been said by the representative of Indonesia. I would merely point that the assertion that East Timor no longer constitutes a decolonization issue cannot be accepted. Both the Security Council and the General Assembly adopted several resolutions, from 1975 to 1981, reaffirming the right of the people of East Timor to self-determination in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV).

Thus the Organization has never recognized the exercise of the right to self-determination to have taken place in any valid form in that Territory. In fact, it is enough to recall that East Timor is still considered by the United Nations as a Non-Self-Governing Territory under Portuguese administration for the purposes of Chapter XI of the Charter, and that the question is included as such in the agenda of the General Assembly and of the Special Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: Members are aware that, due to the various activities envisaged in observance of the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration, this year our meeting programme will be extremely heavy, in particular in view of the holding of two regional seminars away from Headquarters and one here at the United Nations. Accordingly, I wish to remind members that, in accordance with the programme of meetings for the year approved by the General Assembly, the subsidiary bodies are scheduled to meet between February and May to complete consideration of the items allocated for their review and report. I wish to request the two Sub-Committees to make optimum use of the very limited time available to them in order to enable the Special Committee to submit its report to the Assembly within the prescribed time.

(The Chairman)

As indicated in paragraph 4 of document A/AC.109/L.1718, I intend to hold consultations with the various parties concerned with regard to the order of priorities for consideration of items in plenary meetings, with a view to submitting appropriate recommendations at a later date.

As members are aware, the Special Committee annually reviews additional measures that might possibly be taken to curtail its documentation requirements. Bearing in mind the substantial progress made to date in that regard, I would ask members to continue to exercise their initiative in co-operating fully with the efforts of the Organization.

At this stage I should like to draw members' attention to paragraphs 8 to 10 of my note relating to the utilization of conference-servicing resources. As indicated in the note, at its forty-fourth session the General Assembly waived rules 67 and 108 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly, in order to permit meetings to be declared open and debates to proceed without the presence of the quorum required under those rules. It is therefore my intention to convene the meetings of the Special Committee at the scheduled time to make the maximum use of the services available to the Special Committee. I am confident that I shall receive the full co-operation of all the members in that regard.

In the same context I wish to request the presiding officers of the Sub-Committees to schedule meetings, as far as possible, only when a sufficient number of speakers will ensure full utilization of the time allotted and also to minimize the wastage in conference resources resulting from the cancellation of scheduled meetings. They are also requested to continue the practice of holding extensive consultations and informal meetings whenever possible, with a view to reducing the number of formal meetings to a minimum.

As regards the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, and as indicated in General Assembly decision 44/429, the Assembly took note of the

(The Chairman)

interim report of the Secretary-General on the International Decade, contained in document A/44/800, and recommended that the Secretary-General request those States and organizations of the United Nations system which had not done so to reply not later than 1 April 1990 to his communication of 31 January 1989, and that the Secretary-General should invite them once again to submit suggestions so that they might be taken into account in the final report to be submitted to the Assembly at its forty-fifth session, which would enable the Assembly to consider and adopt an action plan aimed at ushering in, in the twenty-first century, a world free from colonialism.

In this connection I have been informed that the Secretary-General will be transmitting the above-mentioned decision to all States and organizations of the United Nations system that have not replied to his communication of 31 January 1989. I hope that many Member States will respond and submit suggestions to be incorporated in the final report of the Secretary-General.

Mr. BERGH JOHANSEN (Norway): On behalf of the Norwegian delegation, I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your re-election to the chairmanship of the Special Committee. I am convinced that your competence and skill will greatly assist us in making further progress towards decolonization.

Furthermore, I should like to take this opportunity to extend to the other Vice-Chairmen, and the Rapporteur, the congratulations of my delegation. I can assure them of my delegation's fullest co-operation. I wish also to express my gratitude to the members of the Special Committee for re-electing me as one of the Vice-Chairmen. I look forward to continuing to work with you all in our common endeavour.

Although the process of decolonization has entered its final stage, difficult and important questions still remain before the Special Committee. In a broad political context, the issues at hand still merit considerable attention. The

(Mr. Bergh Johansen, Norway)

Special Committee is vested with the task of upholding the principles embodied in General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), known as the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, which strengthened the formal basis of a new world order. The resolution remains the corner-stone in the quest for fulfilment of the right to self-determination for all peoples. Until the completion of that process, principles vital to all mankind will not have been fully honoured.

My delegation is particularly pleased to note the remarkable progress in the process towards independence for Namibia during the last year. With the successful outcome of the elections in November 1989 and the important achievements of the Constituent Assembly in its work on a new constitution, the stage now appears set for a smooth transition to independence in the near future.

Norway has followed the positive developments in Namibia closely and has taken an active part in the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) operation. In September last year, we hosted an informal donors' consultation on Namibia, in co-operation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to sensitize donors to the needs of an independent Namibia. Norway stands ready to assist the new Government of Namibia in furtherance of greater well-being for all Namibians.

(Mr. Bergh Johansen, Norway)

Although the transition to independence has not yet been completed, it seems safe to assume that another major undertaking in the process of decolonization will have been brought to a successful conclusion. Still, the remaining small Territories demand from the Committee an imaginative approach in accordance with the principles referred to above and with the individual circumstances prevailing in each case.

In that connection I should like to reiterate my delegation's strong reservations with regard to the inclusion of two items on the agenda of our Committee, that is the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands and the question of Puerto Rico. The positions of my delegation in this respect will be further clarified in due course.

In conclusion, I should like to express the hope that our Committee will be able to make further progress towards the full implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. That can be achieved only if a truly realistic approach is adopted. Particular emphasis in this respect should be placed on the spirit of consensus, which has played such a positive role in previous deliberations of the Committee. That requires, on the part of all, close co-operation and a willingness to compromise. It is my hope that the improved international climate will facilitate our work to that end. The Committee should also examine with an open mind possible ways and means of rationalizing the work of the Committee and enhancing its effectiveness.

As usual, my delegation looks forward to continued co-operation with the administering Powers.

Finally, I should like to assure members of the Committee of the full co-operation of my delegation in our joint efforts towards decolonization.

Mr. ALARCON DE QUESADA (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): I wish first of all, Sir, to congratulate you on your re-election to the chairmanship of the Committee, which is a reflection of the conviction of all members that under your leadership this important United Nations body will be able to shoulder the responsibilities assigned to it by the General Assembly. Your proven skill and ability are a guarantee that the Committee will be in the best position completely to fulfil its mandate.

I wish also to congratulate the other Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur, and to thank members for having elected me to a vice-chairmanship. I assure you, Sir, and the other officers that you may always rely on the active co-operation of the Cuban delegation and of me personally, so the work of this body may proceed in the best possible way.

That is particularly important in a year when the General Assembly will commemorate the thirtieth annversary of the adoption of resolution 1514 (XV), a Declaration which placed upon the Organization a responsibility towards all peoples that had not yet achieved independence. We must fulfil that mandate with the utmost determination, especially since we have recently seen proof of the correctness of that decision of the international community, and since concerted efforts by all have borne important fruit.

Perhaps the most noteworthy result is that we shall soon be celebrating the independence of Namibia, thanks above all to the self-sacrificing struggle of its people, but also to the efforts of the international community and in particular the consistency with which our Committee has defended the principles of resolution 1514 (XV) with respect to that Territory. We hope the Special Committee will manifest the same determination with respect to all other unresolved cases, without exception, so that we may proceed to a worthy celebration of the anniversary of the

(Mr. Alarcon de Quesada, Cuba)

Declaration, which promised all people the exercise of the sacred right to independence.

On behalf of the entire Cuban delegation I wish in conclusion warmly to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the kind words you addressed to Ambassador Oscar Oramas Oliva as he leaves the Organization after five years of dedicated efforts. I assure you those words will be conveyed to Ambassador Oramas Oliva.

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to take this opportunity to welcome Ambassador Alarcon de Quesada to membership of the Bureau of this Committee and, indeed, to the United Nations, as he assumes his new responsibilities. He brings to the Committee rare skills and wide experience, which I am certain will enrich the results of the work of the Committee in the coming year. My colleagues and I look forward to working with him and to continued co-operation from his delegation - which has always been characteristic of the Cuban delegation to this Committee.

Mr. SLABY (Czechoslovakia): On behalf of the delegation of Czechoslovakia I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your re-election to the post of Chairman of the Special Committee on decolonization. I also congratulate the representatives of Cuba, Norway, the Syrian Arab Republic and Tunisia, who have been elected or re-elected to the posts of Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur of the Committee and Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Small Territories respectively. I look forward to working with them all.

It is a great honour and privilege for me to be addressing the decolonization Committee for the first time, and to be conveying profound thanks for the confidence in my country, Czechoslovakia, the Committee expressed by electing me to the post of Vice-Chairman of the Committee and Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Petitions, Information and Assistance.

(Mr. Slaby, Czechoslovakia)

Czechoslovakia has a record of long-standing commitment to the solution of the questions of decolonization, and this function has earned us appreciation for my country's contribution to the principled positions in the struggle against colonialism in all its forms and manifestations. At the same time, our function means to us an honest duty to strive purposefully and in good faith for the early completion of the decolonization process.

At present, the process of decolonization of Namibia, under United Nations auspices, is yet another important stimulus aimed at the speedy implementation of the right to self-determination of a whole number of small and dependent Territories. The forthcoming thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples is a timely opportunity for an intensive search for ways and means for States, international governmental and non-governmental organizations to give some thought to specific steps and measures to contribute to mankind's entering the next century and the next millenium free of any anachronisms such as colonialism.

The International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism demonstrates the increased responsibility of the international community for the unfettered and - if it corresponds with the freely expressed will of nations - independent development of each and every nation.

So allow me to assure you, Mr. Chairman, that in discharging my duties I shall do my utmost to help the Sub-Committee on Petitions, Information and Assistance fully to meet its mandate.

Speaking on behalf of my predecessor, colleague and friend, Mr. Lubomir Dolejs, I wish, in conclusion, to express thanks for the co-operation accorded to him by you, Sir, and his colleagues of the Committee and Sub-Committee,

(Mr. Slaby, Czechoslovakia)

and for the assistance rendered him by the Secretariat in the implementation of his tasks. He has regarded as his privilege - as do I - the opportunity of working together with members of the Committee and the Secretariat who have worked in the field of decolonization with great devotion and competence for many long years.

Mr. JOMAA (Tunisia) (interpretation from French): Allow me first to express to you, Sir, my delegation's every good wish for success on your re-election to the chairmanship of our Committee, and to congratulate the other members of the Bureau. We assure them of our sincere desire to co-operate with them to ensure success for the Committee's work in this important year marked by the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration contained in General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), as has been the case in previous years.

I should also like to express my deep gratitude to all members of the Committee for the honour and trust placed in me by electing me to the chairmanship of the Sub-Committee on Small Territories. I believe this honour and sign of confidence to be a tribute to my country, Tunisia - which has always played a vanguard role in the field of decolonization - and to the well-known commitment and of its Government and people to the ideals of peace, justice and freedom.

Mr. Chairman, you can rest assured that, as Chairman of the Sub-Committee, I shall always be at your disposal, so that the Special Committee can effectively complete its work as mandated by the General Assembly. I hope that I shall live up to the confidence placed in me and that, as was the case with my predecessors, I can count on your valuable co-operation so that together we can reach our common goals, namely, the implementation of the Declaration in resolution 1514 (XV) and the eradication of colonialism in all its forms.

Once again, I congratulate you, Sir, and all the other officers of the Committee.

Mr. SHAHEED (Syrian Arab Republic) (interpretation from Arabic): I am pleased most warmly to congratulate you, Sir, on your re-election to the chairmanship of this important Special Committee. Your outstanding skills and vast experience will stand you in good stead in successfully discharging these functions. You represent a fraternal people of the African continent, with which we are united by suffering and hope. Your competence and patience, on which I know I can rely, are among your well-known outstanding characteristics, which have earned you our admiration.

I am also pleased to congratulate the Vice-Chairmen, the Chairmen of the two Sub-Committees and the Rapporteur, on their elections to their posts.

I wish also to welcome Ambassador Ricardo Alarcón de Quesada of Cuba, a fraternal country. It is an honour for me to participate in the Committee's work under his guidance. I hope to benefit from his great skill and wisdom.

I also welcome Mr. Ghazi Jomaa, a brother from Tunisia, with whom I hope to work very closely, and our new colleague from Czechoslovakia, Mr. Alexander Slaby, Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Petitions, Information and Assistance. It will also be an honour for me to work under his guidance.

I would be remiss indeed if I did not convey my best wishes to all the Secretariat staff working in the Committee office, especially Mr. De Souza, Secretary of the Committee. I wish to express my deep gratitude for their great help which enabled me to carry out my task as Rapporteur of the Committee. Their efficiency and enthusiasm have earned them our appreciation and respect.

One year has elapsed since we worked with you, Sir, in the Working Group. It was in all sincerity that I worked with you, Mr. Chairman, and I found you very understanding and patient when I wanted to express my country's basic positions on certain subjects. However, last year I noticed certain attitudes and positions

(Mr. Shaheed, Syrian Arab Republic)

which gave rise to various feelings in me. I should like to ask you, Sir, always to try to be understanding - as, indeed, you have always been - to expedite our work this year.

First, my delegation would like to propose that the Secretariat draw up concise reports on the work of the Bureau and distribute them to members so that we can be apprised of proceedings in meetings of the Bureau, which are held to ensure the success of our work.

We are really a sort of parliament, and it is only natural that divergent views should be expressed in this type of body. This is a healthy thing, because we are a parliamentary body. But what is not natural is that we should show neither good intentions nor mutual understanding in our attitudes and our actions. In fact, last year in the Bureau we took up a situation having to do with justice and the deprivation of human rights. My delegation introduced an amendment to a draft resolution under item 18. That amendment was endorsed by Cuba and Tunisia. But you opposed it, Mr. Chairman, as did the delegation of Norway.

(Mr. Shaheed, Syrian Arab Republic)

We recognize that right, Mr. Chairman, because brothers can differ; they can have differing views. However, that amendment was not approved, although a majority supported it.

Now, I wonder: How strong is the right of a country to have its amendment endorsed if the majority approves it? The denial of that right by various methods, which I shall not go into here, does not accord with the climate that should prevail in our Committee. Justice should prevail in our debates. We are in a parliamentary-type body, and we must learn how to accept the views of others.

Secondly, my country's delegation would like to know what is the ideal method to deal with a request to convene a meeting of the Bureau to take up any particular item. Last year's experience showed that the request to convene such a meeting was subjected to very complicated methods, which my delegation was unaware of. We cannot reproach others, because we ourselves are unaware, but we have always tried to be patient and to use every possible method. We were dealt with in an unprecedented way in our Organization, and I am afraid that by your action, Mr. Chairman, you have set a precedent we shall have cause to regret.

Thirdly, my delegation would like to be informed as to the names and status of members of the Committee. Last year two members, the representatives of Ethiopia and Norway, participated in meetings of the Bureau, as did the representatives of Tunisia, Czechoslovakia and my country. I am not talking about individuals; I am talking about the principle for the make-up of the Committee. We welcome the presence of the representative of Ethiopia in the Bureau's meetings, but we do not know with what status he participates in those meetings - his participation by your side to debates on questions raised at such meetings. That gives your delegation, Sir, a twofold right of veto. Hence, if a member of your delegation participates in the Bureau's meetings and in the consideration of questions in the Committee, we

(Mr. Shaheed, Syrian Arab Republic)

think the Chairman's role should be limited to guiding the work and analysing what takes place in the meetings.

Fourthly, my delegation affirms the need to give prior notification of the dates of meetings of the Bureau. That could guarantee the participation of all members. Last year certain delegations did not participate because they did not even know that a meeting was to be held, as was the case with last week's meeting. I feel that the dates of the meetings of the Bureau are fixed haphazardly; one learns about them only one or two hours before the meeting begins. That situation should be corrected, so that everyone may have a chance to participate in the Bureau's meetings.

On two occasions I have attempted to take up these questions in meetings of the Bureau. But in view of your refusal, Sir, I have been compelled to come here and set forth what I have told the members. You are the only person who can correct the situation, and you are more capable than anybody else of redressing it.

What I have done is only to put a series of valid questions. It has been necessary to do so because of what happened last year. We may have divergent views on various matters, and the right to have differing views must be accepted. So far I have heard no member of the Committee say that he has no views to express or that he is intellectually bankrupt. I repeat that views can be divergent.

In conclusion, I must affirm, Mr. Chairman, that you are still what you have always been - that is, you will always have our every respect and confidence, even our friendship and love.

Mr. HAGOSS (Ethiopia): I had not intended to make a statement at this very late hour in our Committee's only organizational meeting. None the less, because of the substantive nature of the statement just made by the representative

(Mr. Hagoss, Ethiopia)

of Syria, the Committee's Rapporteur, and since the representative of Syria mentioned the name of my good country in a manner that does not befit solidarity in the membership of the Bureau, I must make the following statement.

First, Mr. Chairman, let me have the honour of congratulating you and the other members of the Bureau, as well as the Chairmen of the Sub-Committees, on their well-deserved election or re-election.

My great country has contributed to the process of decolonization, and it will continue to contribute to it. As a member of the Bureau, Ethiopia continues to contribute its very modest share. Of course, the representative of Syria realizes that the Ethiopian delegation has acted in its capacity as a member of the Bureau in good faith. None the less, it must be said - if for nothing else than the edification of the representative of Syria - that all decisions made in the Bureau must muster support from all members.

(Mr. Hagoss, Ethiopia)

If one or two members of the Bureau object to the inclusion of amendments to resolutions couched by the Bureau, it must be understood that that particular amendment would have been challenged within the Bureau itself, and it would be up to the particular delegation interested in the advancement of that amendment to advance that particular amendment outside the Bureau in its capacity as an individual member of the Special Committee of 24.

This must be said because this is not the only time that the representative of Syria has made such a statement. I heard the statement he made in the General Assembly when the item under consideration was discussed, and therefore I was compelled to make this clarification for those who may not understand the ramifications of the not-so-helpful statement he has just made today.

As far as the participation of the Ethiopian delegation is concerned, of course he knows that Ethiopia is a member of the Bureau and therefore will be involved in the consultations in full scale. I think every delegation that has the privilege of being a member of the Bureau is entitled to deploy all its diplomatic foot soldiers, and, therefore, every member of the Ethiopian delegation will be entitled to assist the Chairman of the Special Committee. It shall therefore remain the privilege of those of us who must assist the Chairman to participate in those meetings - again, in good faith and with a desire to make the Special Committee's work a success.

This had to be a lengthy statement, but I think, as the representative of Syria said, perhaps ventilation, perhaps honesty, perhaps candour can contribute to the acceleration of any work of a Committee. In that spirit, and without ill-feeling, I had to make this statement, and if I was lengthy I apologize to the representative of Syria as well as to the other members of the Committee, but this had to be said.

The CHAIRMAN: The Chair would have wished that this meeting be limited to organizational matters. As you all know, we have several opportunities and various forums for discussing items in their right perspective. The Special Committee has a long-lived tradition and practices by which it abides, practices that it always follows on the basis of collective decision and collective wisdom. Should there be either procedural or substantive matters to be discussed or ways of expediting processes, that can be brought about freely and democratically at the appropriate time and in the appropriate forum, and there are mechanisms to benefit from such constructive proposals. On the other hand, there is no way that any single country or single delegation can, one way or another, impose unilateral decisions or feelings or attitudes on the Special Committee. That remains the path that we shall follow in the year to come.

Mr. RIANOM (Indonesia): Actually, it was not my intention to make another statement had a non-member of the Special Committee not interfered in the Special Committee's internal matters. Allow me, therefore, once again to reply to the statement by the representative of Portugal, just to set the record straight and in order that that statement not confuse members of the Special Committee.

As members may recall, the last time a resolution on the so-called question of East Timor was presented to and voted upon by the General Assembly was in 1982. That resolution, initiated by Portugal and its erstwhile colonies in Africa, was adopted by a slim margin of only two votes, since only 50 Member States voted in favour of the resolution, with 48 Member States voting against it, 50 abstaining and 11 absent.

The result of the 1982 vote on the East Timor resolution actually reflected a clear trend in voting patterns on the question discernible since 1975, the first time the issue was brought before the General Assembly. At that time, owing to the confused situation and the malicious misrepresentations that were spread by

(Mr. Rianom, Indonesia)

Indonesia's detractors, the General Assembly adopted a resolution critical of Indonesia's policy by a vote of 72 in favour, 10 against and 43 abstentions, thus by a margin of support of 62 votes.

By the next year, 1976, a similar resolution passed by a much-reduced margin. That margin continued to decrease with every subsequent year owing to growing understanding by the world community of what really transpired in East Timor, and, consequently, to greater support of the Indonesian position. In 1980 the resolution on East Timor passed by a vote of only 58 in favour, 35 against, and 46 abstentions. In 1981, the margin of support was further reduced to 12, when the votes were recorded at 54 in favour, 42 against and 46 abstentions.

The message which this trend in voting patterns conveyed, and especially the 1982 voting result, was of course not lost on the international community, including Portugal and its supporters. The votes clearly showed an increasing convergence of support for what Indonesia has since the outset maintained, namely, first, that Indonesia from the outset supported the efforts of the new Government of Portugal to decolonize East Timor and time and again reaffirmed its readiness to co-operate with Portugal in the peaceful and orderly implementation of the process of decolonization on the basis of Portugal's own plan, subsequently promulgated as Constitutional Law 7/75 of 1975; secondly, that by precipitately and irresponsibly abandoning the Territory of East Timor at the height of the civil war it had itself instigated, thus completely mishandling the decolonization process, Portugal has in fact forfeited any right, whether legal or moral, to be still considered the administering Power; thirdly, that in face of that the East Timorese people had rightly assumed their inherent right to decolonize themselves, which they did by choosing independence through integration with Indonesia in accordance with General

(Mr. Rianom, Indonesia)

Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and Principles 6, 8 and 9 of resolution 1541 (XV), and as further confirmed by the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV); fourthly, that Indonesia's role is helping to ensure that the democratically expressed will of the majority of the people not be overruled by the armed terror and unilateral imposition of a ruthless minority; and, lastly, that the raising of the so-called question of East Timor in the United Nations constituted a contravention of Article 2, paragraph 7, of the United Nations Charter.

Mr. SHAHEED (Syrian Arab Republic) (interpretation from Arabic): My statement, Sir, was addressed to you and the Secretariat and not to our colleague from Ethiopia, for the simple reason that he cannot answer the questions that I have asked. My questions were specific, and I should like briefly to repeat those questions now.

We asked for the preparation of summary records of the meetings of the Bureau. That is very important to us because we would like representatives to know what takes place during those meetings. It is a subject that should be discussed here. My second point concerned the names, titles and status of the Bureau members. My third point concerned the optimal way of requesting a meeting of the Bureau.

Those are all legitimate questions, and they were not addressed to my colleaque and friend from the Ethiopian delegation who wished to answer them. We have certain questions, and I earnestly request you, Sir, to provide answers. For my part, I will try to present those questions, for a fourth and fifth time, in a clear and calm manner. I do not believe in feverish reactions; I believe only in dialogue, and that all of my queries are legitimate and based on reality. I have not invented any of them, nor have I heard any confirmation or denial of what I said. Hence I would request you, Sir, to co-operate with the Secretariat in presenting answers to my questions.

The CHAIRMAN: I thought I had made the situation clear. I had also hoped that the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, having been with us for a year and, furthermore, having been our Rapporteur, was fully familiar and acquainted with the workings of the Special Committee.

As I said, the Special Committee has several bodies and forums for considering various items and issues. This is the opening meeting of the Special Committee's

(The Chairman)

plenary session. It has specific agenda items to consider, an agenda that has been agreeed upon and a process that is under way.

Should you have any specific questions of substance or other procedural concerns, there are appropriate times and appropriate instruments to approach them. Once again, should you not have been attentive about procedural matters or the nature of the Special Committee, I appeal to you to look into those matters patiently in the future. Should you have any questions, comments or issues to raise, you can always raise them, but at the appropriate time and in the appropriate place. I do not believe that this is the place or the occasion to encumber the Special Committee. All representatives here have other matters to handle. They have come here because they consider this to be a very important forum; and they have come to consider an agenda appropriate to the time and the discussion today.

Mr. RIBEIRO-TELLES (Portugal): I have just a brief remark concerning what was said by the representative of Indonesia in the exercise of the right of reply, which we consider to be a distortion of the historical facts.

I should like to remind him of only one thing. By invading and illegally occupying the Non-Self-Governing Territory of East Timor under Portuguese administration on 7 December 1975, Indonesia prevented the achievement of the decolonization process Portugal had started following the revolution of 25 April 1974. Thus, Indonesia claims that the population of the Territory has already exercised its right to self-determination, opting for integration with Indonesia in 1976. That was never recognized by the United Nations.

Finally, I should like to point out that Portugal has no claim whatsoever to sovereignty over the Territory, but that it is constitutionally committed to the safeguard of the right to self-determination. The upholding of the human rights and the fundamental freedoms of the East Timorese people, as well of its specific

(Mr. Ribeiro-Telles, Portugal)

identity, is also a legal, moral and historical responsibility impending on the Portuguese authorities as the administering Power.

Mr. KADRAT (Iraq) (interpretation from Arabic): I should like to take this opportunity to express to you, Sir, my personal congratulations and those of my delegation on your re-election, with due consideration of your statesmanship and diplomatic expertise. I should also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their re-election and to thank them for their efforts in the past year to make the Special Committee's work successful.

As to the proposal for summary records of the meetings of the Bureau, I believe that it is reasonable and hope that it will receive your attention, Sir, and that of the other members of the Special Committee.

Mr. RIANOM (Indonesia): I am sorry to have to ask to speak once again in reply to the statement just made by the representative of Portugal.

Again, the people of East Timor decided to terminate its colonial status when, on 31 May 1976, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, it exercised the right to self-determination by opting for independence through integration with the Republic of Indonesia. As a result, the Provisional Government of East Timor submitted a formal request for integration to the Indonesian Government, which dispatched a fact-finding mission to the Territory in order to confirm the wishes of the majority of the people.

On the basis of its report, the Indonesia Parliament approved a bill of integration on 15 July 1976. The statute of integration was signed into law and formally promulgated by the President of Indonesia on 17 July 1976. The historical record shows that Portugal precipitately and irresponsibly abandoned the Territory of East Timor at the height of the civil war that it itself had instigated, thus completely mishandling the decolonization process. Hence, Portugal's persistence

(Mr. Rianom, Indonesia)

in pretending to be the administering Power and claiming to represent the interests of the East Timorese people has in fact been forfeited.

CO-OPERATION WITH UNITED NATIONS BODIES

CO-OPERATION WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

The CHAIRMAN: Before adjourning, I wish to draw members' attention to the invitations received to the following meetings: the Latin American Regional Seminar and Latin American Regional NGO Symposium, organized by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to be held in Buenos Aires from 5 to 9 February 1990; and the session of the World Peace Council, to be held in Athens from 6 to 11 February 1990.

I would suggest that the Special Committee authorize me to hold consultations, as appropriate, concerning its participation or otherwise at those and other meetings, as well as on the level of participation when accepting invitations.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: The next meeting of the Special Committee will be announced in the Journal.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.